



The Christmas season is a joyous time of year, but also a time for enhanced safety around the home.

Statistics from the National Safety Council and the National Fire Protection Association show that Christmas tree fires account for more than 400 residential fires each year, causing an average of 20 deaths, 117 injuries and \$20 million in damage. Electrical failures and shorts are the most common cause of Christmas tree fires.

The Broken Arrow Fire Department urges residents to adhere to the following safety tips this holiday season.

- Consider buying an artificial tree instead of a live tree, as they are less prone to fire.
- When purchasing a metallic or artificial tree, look for a label that says it is "fire resistant." Although this does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly. Trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) safety label.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Don't be fooled by a dark green color, as some sellers will paint aging trees. A fresh tree is green with needles that are hard to pull from the branches. The trunk of a fresh tree should be sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground the tree should not lose many needles.
- Do not put a live tree up too early. Typically, a live tree should be left in place for no longer than two weeks.
- Place your tree away from heat sources and do not block walkways or exits.
- The tree stand should be wide-based and should not wobble. Consider securing larger trees with wire.
- Do not let a live tree dry out. Before placing it in the stand, make a fresh cut about one inch from the end of the trunk. Use a stand with a water reservoir that holds at least one gallon of water, and check the water level daily.
- Decorate both real and artificial trees only with flame-retardant or non-combustible decorations. NEVER use lighted candles on any Christmas tree.

- Use only UL-approved lights. Examine each string of lights and do not use those with broken sockets, cut cords or frayed wiring. Do not use strands with empty bulb sockets. Do not link more than three strands on a single outlet. Lights should not touch combustible materials. Mini lights generate less heat and tend to be safer.
- Turn off the tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- In homes with small children, avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable or that have small pieces that might be swallowed. Also avoid trimming that resemble candy or food, as children might be tempted to try eating them.
- Never hang indoor-only lights outside. When hanging outside lights, point the sockets down to avoid moisture buildup. Keep electrical connectors above ground. When linking multiple strands, wrap a plastic bag around the connection and tie ends with Teflon tape.
- Safely dispose of live trees when they begin to dry out. Do not burn parts of the tree in your fireplace as this can lead to chimney fires.